

Life Size Sea Turtles



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Students will describe the sizes of different turtles compared to their own body size. Students will use computational, graphing, and measuring techniques to draw life size sea turtles.

Duration

Activity: 2-3 hours split over multiple days if needed

Supplies

- Large Sheets of paper (butcher paper, flip chart paper, etc.)
- 1-inch grid paper
- 200-300 feet of twine
- Writing materials
- Measuring tools (meter stick, yard stick, tape measure)
- Sidewalk chalk

Background

This activity will have students draw life size sea turtles. Students will need to know the average size of several species of turtle. The five sea turtle species that inhabit the Atlantic Ocean near the Chesapeake Bay are the green, hawksbill, loggerhead, Kemp's ridley, and leatherback.

Instructions

1. Divide the class into groups of two or three and assign a different turtle species to each group. Have students research the size of the different species. Students can also gather information about the life history of the turtle to report to the class. Research topics include:
 - a. What characteristics the turtle has
 - b. What it eats and what eats it
 - c. How it reproduces and lays eggs
 - d. Its migration patterns
 - e. Its history of being hunted or eaten by humans
 - f. Its current status
2. Once the size and natural history information have been compiled, students can learn how to use grids to draw the turtle to scale. Provide the students with grid paper. Tell them to make a drawing of the outline of their hand.
3. Once they have finished drawing the outline of their hand, have students make a grid on the much larger paper. The grid squares on the large paper should be three to five times bigger than the squares on the smaller grid paper. Once the students have a large grid made, have them transfer the small drawing of their hand to the larger paper. **NOTE:** It helps to number the squares on both pieces of paper. Matching the numbers of the squares on the two pieces of paper helps to transfer the drawing.

4. Students will use this method to draw life-size sea turtles. First, have the students make a drawing of a turtle on a clean sheet of 1-inch grid paper. For this drawing, 1-inch squares represent 1 foot on each side. For example, a leatherback can be about 7 feet long so. On the 1-inch grid, the drawing will be 7 squares long.
5. Using chalk, students next create a large grid on the parking lot or other open site. The site should be large enough to accommodate the full size of the turtles. Make each of the grid squares at the site 1 foot on each side. Transferring the turtle image from the 1-inch grid to the 1-foot grid may be easier by the following:
 - a. Use two or three long strings with markers every foot
 - b. If available, use a carpenter's chalk line
 - c. Make sure to number the squares on the drawing and have them numbered the same on the site
 - d. The site grid does not have to be exactly square, so don't let this part of the process be too burdensome
 - e. After the grid is transferred to the study site, the students can begin to draw the turtle
6. Have the class gather around the image of each turtle. Have the group report on the turtle species they have researched and drawn. Ask the group members to join hands to see how many it takes to make a continuous chain around their turtle. Ask them to stand inside their turtle. How many students fit inside?

Adapted from "Whale of a Tail" in Project WILD Aquatics pg. 10 (2005)